



SCORECARD ON CRIME AND JUSTICE IN NORTH CAROLINA

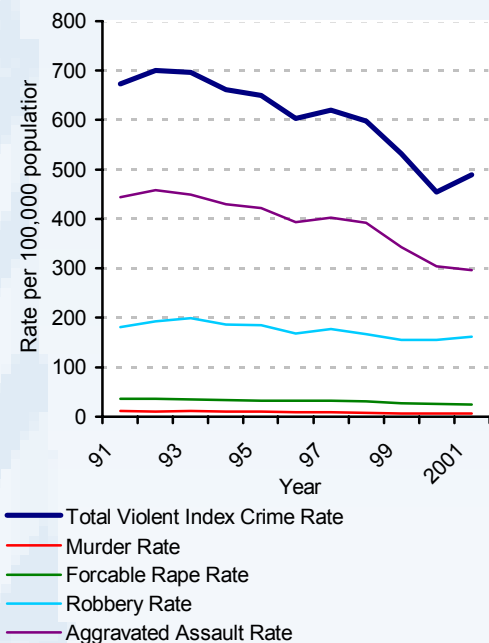
Slight Upturn In Violent Crimes in 2001

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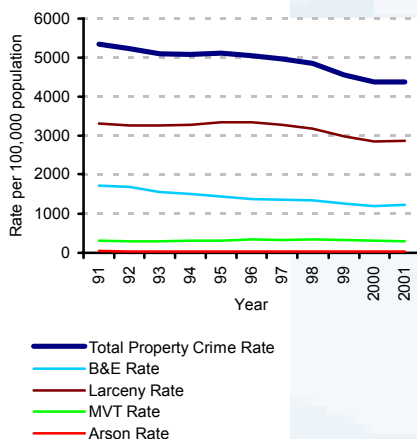
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After a ten year downward trend in violent crimes, 2001 provided a slight upturn in North Carolina's violent crime rate. An increase in the incidents of robberies fueled the rise. However, the overall trend continues to illustrate progress in reducing violent crimes in our state. Reported violent crime decreased from 673 offenses, per 100,000, in 1991 to 489 offenses in 2001 (27.3%). The largest decline occurred between 1995 and 1999 with an average annual decline of 3.6 percent occurring during this period. Recent data indicate a slightly upward rate of growth with the violent index crime rate growing 7.5 percent from 2000 to 2001.

Violent Crime Rates 1991 - 2001



Property Crime Rates 1991 - 2002



Property Crimes Show signs of Leveling Off In 2002

Reported property crime also followed the downward trend during the last decade dropping from 5,344 reported offenses per 100,000, in 1991 to 4,379 in 2001 (18.1%). The rate of reported property crime declined consistently from 1991 to 1994, experienced slight growth from

1994 to 1995 and was followed by a period of significant decline until 2000. In 2001, the rate of reported property crime reflects another small upward tick over the rate for 2000, and may suggest that a new rate of growth is on the horizon.

Future Bed Space a Growing Concern for the Department of Correction



Offender Population December 10, 2002

Prison Inmates 33,426

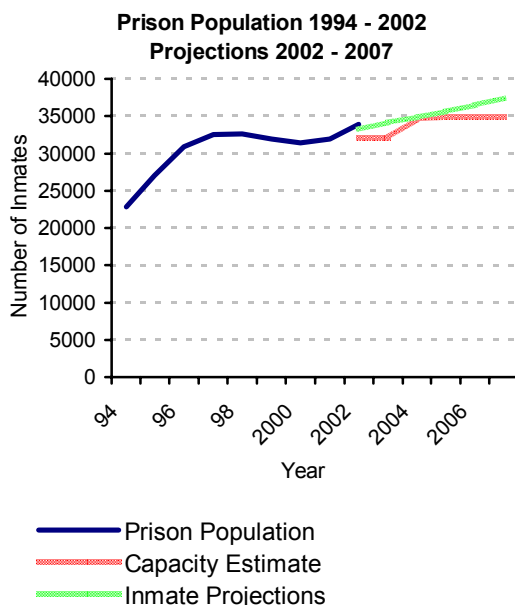
Probationers 115,262

Parolees 2,497

Total 151,185

Male Inmates 31,221

Female Inmates 2,205



The Division of Prisons currently contains 78 prison units classified as close, medium or minimum according to the security provided. Nearly 10,000 correction officers work supervising 32,000 inmates.

On the average, the cost to house, feed and clothe an inmate is more than \$60 a day. The Division of Prisons must also provide support services such as health care, psychological treatment and educational opportunities.

As our Department of Correction (DOC) struggles to provide adequate housing for inmates, estimates are that even with three new prison units due to come online over the next two years, maximum capacity will occur during 2004 and remain constant at 34,847 throughout the decade. As the prison population projections graph (*above left*) illustrates, unless additional bed space is added or the sentencing structure is revised, our state's ability to house inmates will be stretched beyond capacity in the second half of this decade. The estimated prison populations are 37,405 in 2007 and 40,077 in 2010.

The DOC is also being confronted with the dilemma of non-English speaking convicts. This is problematic for staff in community based alternatives, prisons and probation. The influx of non-English persons in our state demands that each element of the criminal justice system provide an ability for these people to communicate. Therefore, it would not be a stretch that many of the positions opening within the DOC over the next few years require some bilingual proficiencies. Given this new requirement, these positions would become more competitive and potentially demand higher salaries.

The North Carolina DOC has been placed in an unenviable position to provide correctional services and housing to an increasing number of adjudicated individuals at a time when our state battles budget worries.

Prison Statistics NC DOC Data Through 2001

NUMBER OF PRISONS 76

INMATE POPULATION 32,064

PRISON SYSTEM CAPACITY..... standard 28,180..... maximum 34,399

GENDER

Male 30,139 94.0%

Female 1,925 6.0%

RACE

Black 20,083 62.3%

White 10,540 32.7%

American Indian 609 1.9%

Oriental 96 0.0%

Other 895 2.9%

MOST FREQUENT CRIMES OF 2001 PRISON ADMISSIONS

Drugs 22.2% Larceny 10.2%

Assault 11.0% Breaking & Entering 9.4%

DWI 10.8% Robbery 6.1%

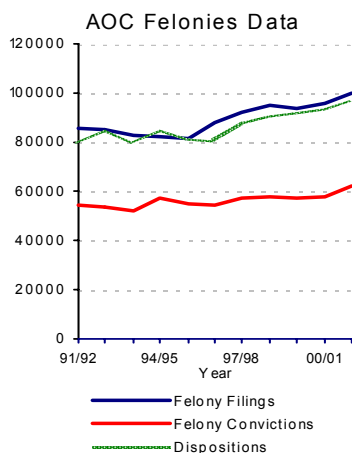
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF PRISON ADMISSIONS IN 2001

Grade	Highest Grade Claimed	Tested Reading Score
0-2.9	0.1%	9.6%
3-7.9	3.3%	37.1%
8-11.9	50.0%	26.3%
12 & higher	45.9%	27.0%

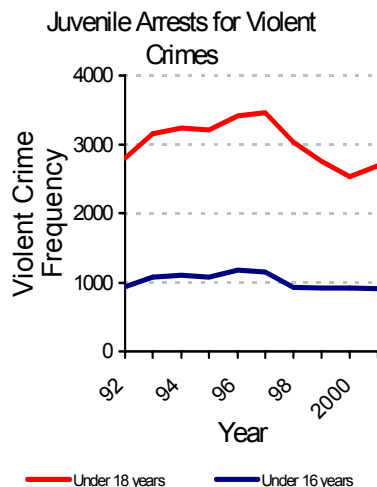
COST OF SUPERVISION

	per day	per year
Minimum custody	\$54.02	\$19,707
Medium custody	\$67.43	\$24,611
Close custody	\$84.21	\$30,736

Felony Case Filings on the Rise



With normal increases in our state's population came a rise in felony case filings. Consequently, there has been a rise in felony convictions over the past seven years. This increase has placed additional burdens on our state's courts to efficiently and expeditiously dispose of these cases. The increase also places more burden on our Department of Correction to supervise convicted felons, regardless of what sanction is dispensed by judges. If the rising trend in felony filings continues, the courts may be severely impacted from overwhelmed clerks offices to a rising need for more judges and courtrooms and emerging courtroom automation technologies. Our Administrative Office of the Courts has been forced to address this and several other trends in court filings.



Juvenile Justice Issues

After an increase in property crimes by youths under age 18 during the mid 1990s, these types of crimes have shown some leveling off over the past three years. However, as the chart to the left indicates, after several years of decline, there has been a rise in violent crimes by youths in the 16 to 17 year old age range. This increase seems to mirror the rise in violent index crimes as illustrated on page 1. It is interesting to note the under 16 year old group continues to show a leveling in violent criminal activities. This data provides ample evidence that projects targeted at curbing adolescent violence are of extreme importance to prevent future adult violence.



North Carolina's index crime rate dropped 19 percent from 1991 to 2001 with current data indicating a rate of 4,867 index crimes per 100,000 citizens.

During the last three years this rate experienced a 4.5 percent decline, however, over the last year North Carolina's index crime rate actually experienced a minimal level of growth. Future trends indicate an expected leveling off period followed by an increase in this rate as the state's juvenile population expands and increases the number of people in the crime prone age group of 15 to 24.

Understanding the Decline in Crime in the 1990s

In *Reflections on the Crime Decline: Lessons for the Future*, published by the Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, the unprecedented drop in crime rates during the later 1990s is discussed in an open forum format. Of special interest is the dramatic drop in violent crimes from 1993 through 1999. North Carolina also experienced these declines. However, when attempting to address possible explanations for these reductions, the authors pose several potential reasons. The most prominent of these are:

- Did new police strategies bring crime rates down?
- Did the buildup of prisons pay dividends?
- Did communities galvanize to fight crime more efficiently?

- Did the strong economy of the late 1990s prove the adage that more jobs mean less crime?
- Did new gun control policies and more effective enforcement of laws regulating gun ownership and distribution reduce gun violence?
- Did the crack markets that sprang up in the mid-1980s, and attendant violence, stabilize?

Each of these issues and more are addressed in this 45 page publication that can be obtained at:

<http://urban.org/url.cfm?ID=7834>

Perspective: An Overview of North Carolina's Criminal Justice System

During the past decade North Carolina's crime rate has dropped considerably with numerous policy initiatives and legislation being attributed as either causal or contributing factors for this decline. Community policing, the reform of the juvenile justice system, tougher sentencing legislation and practices, automation initiatives, no-nonsense domestic violence policies, and enabling legislation to improve the systems' response to crime victims are lauded as successful and indeed they should be. However, as North Carolina moves further into the 21st century new challenges will arise, old crime problems may resurface and issues related to maintaining and strengthening system capacity, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency will pose significant challenges for the state's criminal and juvenile justice professionals, and those who provide services for victims of crime.

The tragic events of 9/11/01 and the subsequent war on terrorism created a sense of urgency and made it apparent that the state's ability to respond to potential disasters was strong but still lacking in some areas. The lack of training and the inability of multiple responding agencies to communicate with each other demands legislative attention. Automating, enhancing and connecting the state's main criminal justice intelligence and records management systems remains a priority and will enhance the ability of the state's public safety officials not only during crisis but during normal operations as well. The current fiscal crisis has placed the state's Division of Criminal Information network in jeopardy which, without fiscal support threatens the local law enforcement community's ability to access vital criminal history information. The state's forensic lab is also at a crossroad with insufficient resources to adequately process evidentiary materials. All of these deficiencies need directed attention in order to enhance public safety, improve system efficiency and place the state in a stronger position for responding to the unknown.

The events of 9/11 also refocused our attention on crime victims and revealed the need for an even stronger legislative package in this area. Closer to home the dramatic rise in the number of domestic violence homicides, and the devastating effects that domestic violence can have on children, became a stark reminder that much work remains to be done in this area. Addressing the needs of children who witness domestic violence must become a priority in order to provide for their current safety and stop the vicious cycle which increases their potential for becoming future abusers. Permanent funding for the statewide automated victim assistance network has not been forthcoming and funds

for other victims' services initiatives are either clogged, capped or non-existent and consequently bar effective service delivery, or worse prevent service provision entirely.

Disproportionate minority involvement in the juvenile justice system, and the dilemma of what to do with suspended and expelled students, continues to perplex those who work with the state's youth. Effective prevention and intervention strategies, such as those designed to promote school readiness and alternative learning programs, can attack these problems and should be expanded in order to rescue more of North Carolina's children from possible future adult criminality. Diligent efforts to address these problems should begin at the local community level with adequate support being directed to these grassroots initiatives.

The Commission is aware that the state's current fiscal crisis will exacerbate the ability to fund many of these recommended legislative items, therefore this document not only offers action for legislative consideration it outlines fiscal impact and notes revenue sources for possible consideration. Underlying most of the proposed legislative items is the need to explore novel revenue sources and to think creatively when determining how to provide initial and recurring funds for these important legislative endeavors.

This legislative agenda reflects the work of the Governor's Crime Commission's four standing committees and seeks to reassert the prominence of North Carolina's criminal justice system, within the state's human services and technology policy arenas, and to proactively refocus attention to the issues of crime, victims services, juveniles and system improvements with the intent of improving the safety and security of North Carolina's most valuable asset - its citizens.

This publication was produced in-house by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center of the Governor's Crime Commission

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